

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6512

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FOR ARA/AND/B AND SCS

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CARR, BL

SUBJ: U.S. PRISONERS: DEVELOPMENTS ON EXTORTION ATTEMPT
IN SANTA CRUZ

REF: LA PAZ 5958

1. NO NEW DEVELOPMENTS JULY 31. CONSUL KEMP ARRIVED SANTA CRUZ AUGUST 1 AND ON AUGUST 2 REPORTED THAT BOTH MARRERO AND CUNNINGHAM HAD BEEN TAKEN DOWN TO POLICE CHIEF CAMACHO'S OFFICE FOR A TALK. THEY REPORTED ON THEIR RETURN TO KEMP THAT CAMACHO HAD QUIZZED THEM ON WHAT WAS GOING ON BUT THAT CONVERSATION HAD NO ADVERSE OUTCOME AND THEY HAD BEEN RETURNED TO PRISON AFTER A SHORT WHILE. KEMP TALKED TO PRISON GOVERNOR AUGUST 1 AND GOVERNOR ASSURED KEMP U.S. PRISONERS WOULD BE PROTECTED. SUBSECRETARY BALLIVIAN HAD TELEPHONED PRISON GOVERNOR AS HE HAD TOLD US HE WOULD DO (REFTEL) AND EVIDENTLY HAD ALSO INSTRUCTED GOVERNOR TO ADMIT MRS. SHEA WITHOUT RESTRICTION, BECAUSE SHE HAS HAD NO PROBLEM ENTERING PRISON THIS WEEK.

2. MORNING OF AUGUST 2 MENACHO WAS STILL TALKING TO U.S. PRISONERS AND AT ONE POINT THREATENED MARRERO "TO GO TO
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THE PREFECTO" (GOVERNOR OF SANTA CRUZ PROVINCE).
MENACHO WAS ALSO ABLE TO LEAVE PRISON AUGUST 2.

3. AT ABOUT 4:30 P.M. AUGUST 2 PREFECT CAME TO PRISON GATE WITH ARMED ESCORTS AND MARRERO WAS CALLED OUT. IN FRONT OF MENACHO AND PRISON GOVERNOR, PREFECT QUESTIONED MARRERO SHARPLY AND REPEATEDLY AS TO WHAT MARRERO HAD TOLD THE

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. MARRERO INSISTED, AS IS TRUE, THAT HE HAD TOLD MINISTRY NOTHING. HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH EMBASSY REPS AND WITH MRS. SHEA HAPPENINGS IN PRISON RELATED TO MENACHO. HE STUCK TO THIS STORY AND PREFECT EVENTUALLY LEFT. MRS. SHEA WAS ALSO WITNESS TO PREFECT'S VISIT.

4. CONSUL KEMP REPORTED ABOVE TO EMBASSY AND THAT EVENING, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL ADVISER QUINTANILLA, I PROTESTED TO SUBSECRETARY OF JUSTICE BALLIVIAN THAT WE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HARRASSMENT OF U.S. PRISONERS; THAT RECENT EVENTS SEEMED HARD TO BELIEVE IN COUNTRY LIKE BOLIVIA AND MORE TYPICAL OF LAWLESS FRONTIER TOWN. BALLIVIAN HAD ALSO BEEN TOLD MUCH THE SAME THING THROUGH IN VERY STRONG TERMS BY QUINTANILLA AND I BELIEVE THAT HE WAS SINCERELY UPSET, AND IN FACT ASHAMED OF PREFECT'S BEHAVIOR. BALLIVIAN SAID HE WOULD CALL PREFECT AS SOON AS HE COULD GET CONNECTION AND LAY IT ON THE LINE AS TO MENACHO'S CHARACTER AND OBLIGATIONS OF PREFECT TO KEEP MATTERS IN HAND AT JAIL.

5. BALLIVIAN PHONED ME AUGUST 3 ABOUT 11:00 A.M. TO SAY HE HAD HAD TALK WITH PREFECT AND FELT SURE THAT PREFECT NOW UNDERSTOOD SITUATION. BALLIVIAN TOLD ME THAT MENACHO, A "COMPLETE ROGUE" HAD GONE TO PREFECT WITH STORY THAT MARRERO AND CUNNINGHAM WERE ATTEMPTING TO REPEAT VANDERVOORT'S TH# EARLIER THIS YEAR TO BRIBE COURT AND POLICE OFFICIALS WITH AMOUNTS UP TO \$40,000. BALLIVIAN SAID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PREFECT APPARENTLY NOT INFORMED ON EXTORTION ATTEMPTS AND HAD BOUGHT MENACHO'S STORY, THUS ACCOUNTING FOR HIS VISIT TO JAIL THE PREVIOUS AFTERNOON. BALLIVIAN HAD ASSURANCES FROM PREFECT THAT HE WOULD MAKE SURE THAT IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER MENACHO WAS ISOLATED FROM PRISONERS. BALLIVIAN ALSO SAID HIS TRIP TO SANTA CRUZ HAD BEEN DELAYED BUT THAT HE STILL PLANNED TO GO. HE HOPED I WOULD ACCEPT HIS CONVICTION, HOWEVER, THAT AS A RESULT OF ACTIONS AND PHONE CALLS SO FAR, U.S. PRISONERS WERE NOT IN PHYSICAL DANGER. I SAID I HOPED THIS WAS SO BUT THAT U.S. SOUBTED MATTER WOULD BE FULLY STRAIGHTENED OUT UNTIL HE OR OTHER TOP OFFICIAL WENT TO SANTA CRUZ.

6. CONSUL KEMP RETURNING TO LA PAZ AFTERNOON OF AUGUST 3 AND VICE-CONSUL RANDOLPH WILL FLY TO SANTA CRUZ AUGUST 4. AS OF MORNING AUGUST 3 SITUATION AT JAIL QUIET AND PRISONERS AND MRS. SHEA REASSURED AS TO PRISONERS SECURITY. MRS. SHEA PLANS COME TO LA PAZ AUGUST 4. IT IS MY OPINION, SHARED BY CONSUL KEMP AND LEGAL ADVISER QUINTANILLA, THAT ALTHOUGH REACTION OF BALLIVIAN AND OTHER OFFICIALS COULD HAVE BEEN MORE SATISFACTORY, WE HAVE MADE SO MUCH FUSS AND SANTA CRUZ OFFICIALS ARE SO STIRRED UP BY LA PAZ INTEREST

THAT, AS BALLIVIAN INDICATES, PHYSICAL THREAT TO PRISONERS
IS NOW MINIMAL. IF WE RECEIVE NO ADVERSE REPORTS FROM
VICE-CONSUL RANDOLPH, I PLAN TO RECALL HIM TO LA PAZ
AUGUST 5.

7. QUINTANILLA PLANS TRIP TO SANTA CRUZ AND WE WILL HAVE
SOME EMBASSY REPRESENTATION DOWN THERE MOST OF NEXT WEEK,
DEPENDING UPON DEVELOPMENTS.
BEAL

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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